CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

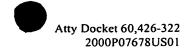
A vehicle port control system comprising:

a capaciflective sensor sensing an object a predetermined distance about said vehicle port;

a lock securing said port; and

a control unit in communication with said capaciflective sensor, controlling the actuation of said lock.

- 2. The vehicle port control system of Claim 2 including an electronic key device sending a key code to said control unit wherein said control unit actuates said lock when said key code matches said security code.
- 3. The vehicle port control system of Claim 2 wherein said electronic key device sends said key code when requested by said control unit.
- 4. The vehicle port control system of Claim 3 wherein said control unit requests said key code when said object crosses said predetermined distance.
- 5. The vehicle port control system of Claim wherein said object is at least a portion of a person.
- 6. The vehicle port control system of Claim 1 including a vehicle subsystem in communication with said control unit, responding to the presence of an object crossing said predetermined distance.
- 7. The vehicle port control system of Claim 1 including a latch controlling opening and closing of said port.



8. The vehicle port control system of Claim 7 wherein said latch includes a sensor in communication with said control unit that detects movement of said latch.

9. The vehicle port control system of Claim 8 wherein said sensor is an infrared sensor.

- 10. A vehicle port control system comprising:
 - a\vehicle port;
- a dapaciflective sensor sensing an object a predetermined distance about said port;
- a control unit in communication with said capaciflective sensor, comparing a signal from said capaciflective sensor with a predetermined threshold.
- 11. The vehicle port control system of Claim 10 including a lock controlled by said control unit, securing said port.
- 12. The vehicle port control system of Claim 11 including an electronic key device sending a key code to said control unit wherein said control unit actuates said lock when said key code matches said security code.
- 13. The vehicle port control system of Claim 12 wherein said electronic key device sends said key code when requested by said control unit.
- 14. The vehicle port control system of Claim 13 wherein said control unit requests said key code when said object crosses said predetermined distance.
- 15. The vehicle port control system of Claim 10 wherein said object is at least a portion of a person.
- 16. The vehicle port control system of Claim 15 wherein said predetermined threshold relates to the presence of said at least portion of a person within said predetermined distance.
- 17. The vehicle port control system of Claim 10 including a vehicle subsystem in communication with said control unit, responding to the presence of an object crossing said predetermined distance.



- 18. The vehicle port control system of Claim 10 including a latch controlling opening and closing of said port.
- 19. The vehicle port control system of Claim 7 wherein said latch includes a sensor in communication with said control unit that detects movement of said latch.



20. \ A method of port control comprising the steps of:

establishing a voltage on a first surface;

establishing about the same voltage on a second surface spaced from the first surface;

establishing a lower voltage on a third surface spaced from the second surface, thereby propagating an electric field from the first surface, around the second surface, and to the third surface;

sensing changes in the electric field caused by the presence of an objected in the electric field;

generating an electric signal based on the changes in the electric field; comparing the electric signal to a predetermined threshold; and controlling a port based on the comparison.

